



# International Unemployment Rates and Employment Indexes, Seasonally Adjusted, 2008-2012

## Table of Contents

Highlights .....	1
CHART 1. Unemployment rates adjusted to U.S. concepts, 10 countries, seasonally adjusted, October 2010–March 2012.....	2
CHART 2. Unemployment rates unadjusted by BLS, 10 European Union countries or areas, seasonally adjusted, October 2010–March 2012.....	2
TABLE 1. Unemployment rates adjusted to U.S. concepts, 10 countries, seasonally adjusted .....	3
TABLE 2. Unemployment rates unadjusted by BLS, 10 European Union countries or areas, seasonally adjusted .	3
TABLE 3. Employment indexes adjusted to U.S. concepts, 10 countries, seasonally adjusted .....	4
Technical notes .....	5

## Highlights

- Of the foreign countries covered by the BLS unemployment comparisons program, unemployment rates increased in March 2012 in Italy and the Netherlands, and decreased in Canada and Sweden. See [Chart 1](#) and [Table 1](#).
- The highest unemployment rates in March were in Italy (9.9 percent) and France (9.7 percent).
- For the EU countries not covered in the BLS comparisons but tracked by BLS, unemployment rates decreased in March 2012 in Austria and Ireland. See [Chart 2](#) and [Table 2](#).
- Employment in March 2012 increased in 3 countries, decreased in 3 countries, and remained unchanged in Germany. See [Table 3](#).

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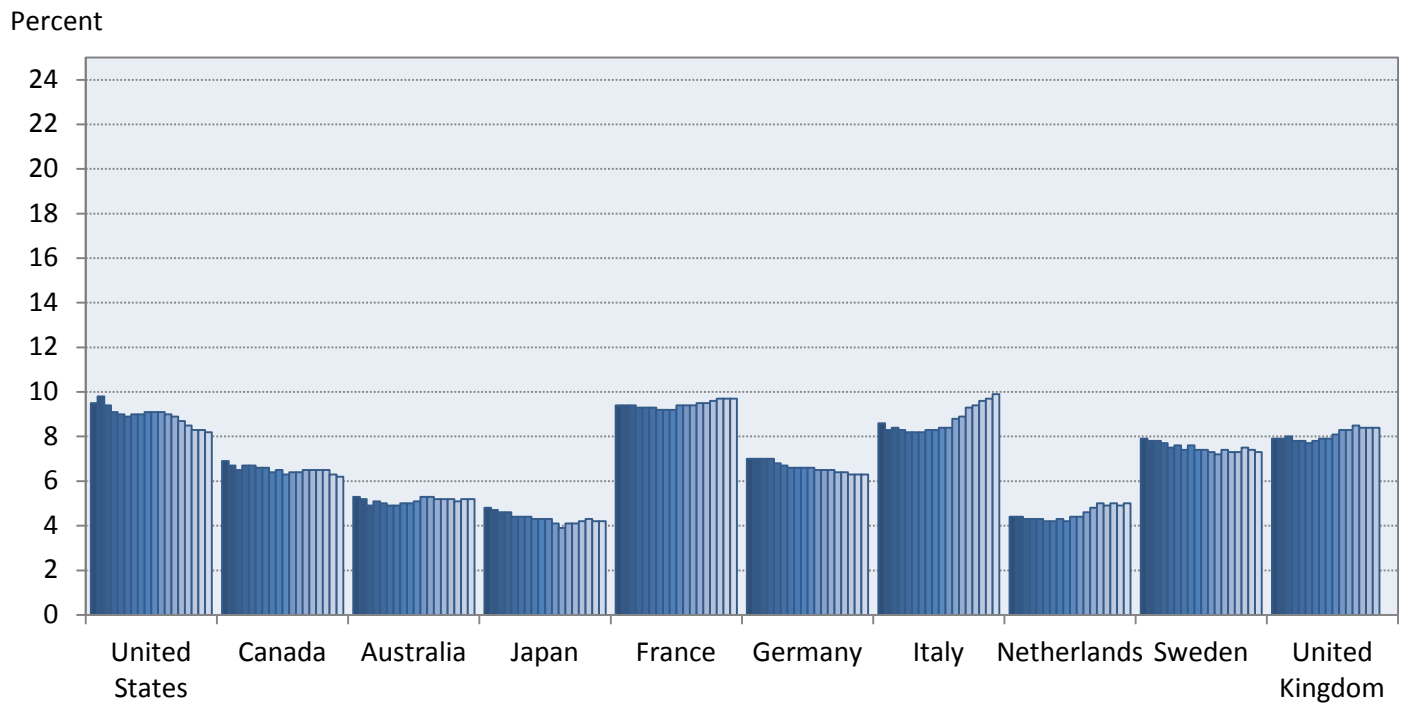
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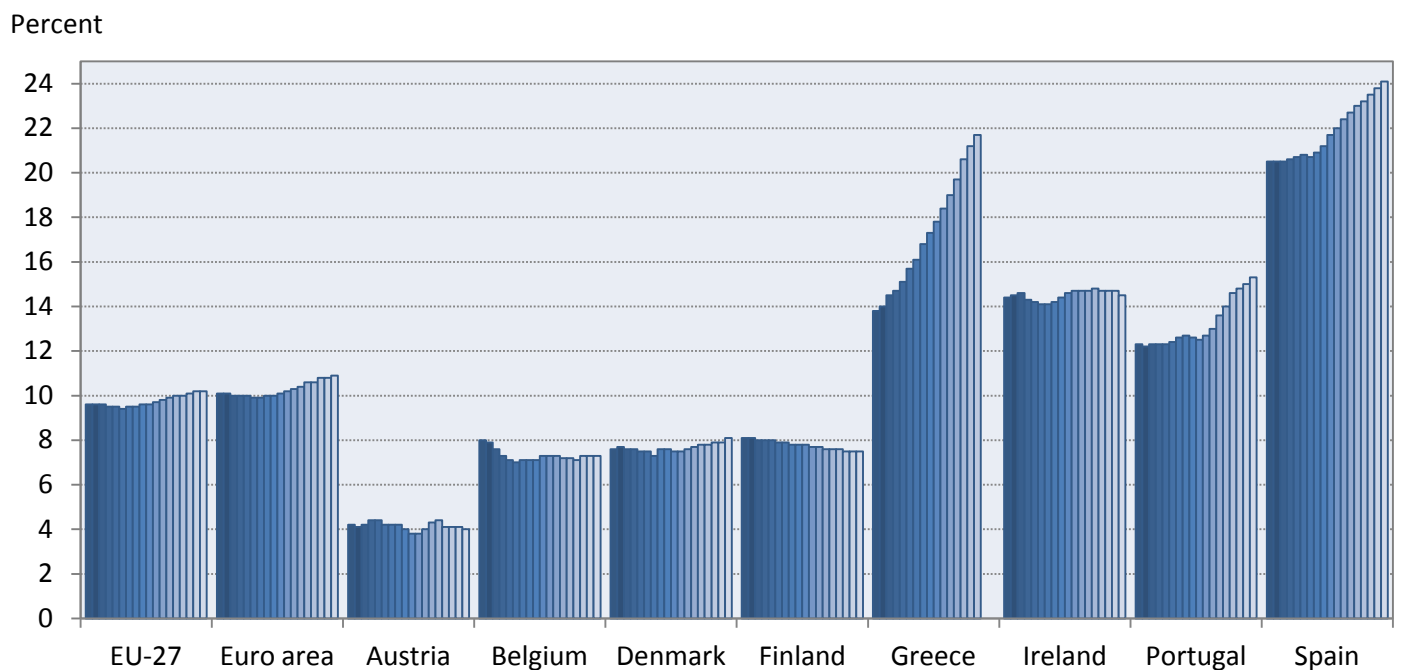
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**CHART 1. Unemployment rates adjusted to U.S. concepts, 10 countries, seasonally adjusted, October 2010–March 2012**



NOTE: Latest available monthly data are shown for each country. See [Table 1](#).

**CHART 2. Unemployment rates unadjusted by BLS, 10 European Union countries or areas, seasonally adjusted, October 2010–March 2012**



NOTE: Latest available monthly data are shown for each country. See [Table 2](#).

**TABLE 1. Unemployment rates adjusted to U.S. concepts, 10 countries, seasonally adjusted (in percent)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Mar. 2011	Jan. 2012	Feb. 2012	Mar. 2012	Change from Feb. 2012-Mar. 2012
United States	5.8	9.3	9.6	8.9	9.1	9.1	8.7	8.2	8.9	8.3	8.3	8.2	-0.1
Australia	4.2	5.6	5.2	5.1	4.9	5.2	5.2	5.2	4.9	5.1	5.2	5.2	0.0
Canada	5.3	7.3	7.1	6.5	6.5	6.3	6.5	6.4	6.6	6.5	6.3	6.2	-0.1
France	7.5	9.2	9.4	9.3	9.2	9.4	9.5	9.7	9.3	9.7	9.7	9.7	0.0
Germany (1)	7.6	7.8	7.2	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.4	6.3	6.7	6.3	6.3	6.3	0.0
Italy	6.8	7.9	8.6	r 8.6	8.3	8.5	r 9.2	9.7	r 8.2	r 9.6	r 9.7	9.9	0.2
Japan (2)	3.7	4.8	4.8	r 4.3	r 4.4	r 4.1	4.2	4.2	r 4.4	4.3	4.2	4.2	0.0
Netherlands	3.1	3.7	4.5	4.5	4.2	4.4	4.9	5.0	4.2	5.0	4.9	5.0	0.1
Sweden	6.0	8.2	8.3	7.4	7.5	7.3	7.4	7.4	7.6	7.5	7.4	7.3	-0.1
United Kingdom	5.7	7.7	7.9	8.1	7.9	8.3	8.4		7.7	8.4			

(1) Quarterly and monthly data are calculated by applying adjustment factors to current administrative data and therefore are less precise indicators of unemployment under U.S. concepts than the annual figures.

(2) Japan data from March 2011 through August 2011 are based on referential estimates from the Statistics Bureau of Japan that include areas affected by the March 11, 2011 earthquake.

r = revised

NOTE: See [Technical notes](#) for information on sources and methods.

Longer time series are provided in the Excel version at [www.bls.gov/ilc/intl\\_unemployment\\_rates\\_monthly.xls](http://www.bls.gov/ilc/intl_unemployment_rates_monthly.xls).

**TABLE 2. Unemployment rates unadjusted by BLS, 10 European Union countries or areas, seasonally adjusted (in percent)**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Mar. 2011	Jan. 2012	Feb. 2012	Mar. 2012	Change from Feb. 2012-Mar. 2012
EU-27 (1)	7.1	9.0	9.7	9.7	9.5	9.7	r 10.0	10.2	9.4	10.1	10.2	10.2	0.0
Euro area (1)	7.6	9.6	10.1	10.2	10.0	10.2	r 10.6	10.9	r 9.9	r 10.8	10.8	10.9	0.1
Austria	3.8	4.8	4.4	4.2	4.1	3.9	4.3		4.2	4.1	r 4.1	4.0	-0.1
Belgium	7.0	7.9	8.3	7.2	7.1	7.3	7.2	7.3	r 7.0	r 7.3	r 7.3	7.3	0.0
Denmark	3.4	6.0	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.5	7.8	7.9	7.5	7.9	7.9	8.1	0.2
Finland	6.4	8.2	8.4	7.8	7.8	7.7	7.6	7.5	r 7.9	7.5	r 7.5	7.5	0.0
Greece	7.7	9.5	12.6	17.7	r 16.7	r 18.4	r 20.5		r 15.7	21.7			
Ireland	6.3	11.9	13.7	14.4	14.2	r 14.7	14.7	14.6	14.1	14.7	14.7	14.5	-0.2
Portugal	8.5	10.6	12.0	12.9	12.6	12.7	14.1	15.0	12.4	14.8	15.0	15.3	0.3
Spain	11.3	18.0	20.1	21.7	21.0	22.0	r 23.0	23.8	20.8	r 23.5	r 23.8	24.1	0.3

(1) The European Union-27 (EU-27) refers to the EU member countries as of January 1, 2007. The Euro area refers to the EU member countries that adopted the euro as a common currency. See [Technical notes](#).

r = revised

NOTE: These data are prepared by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT). See [Technical notes](#) for information on sources and methods.

Longer time series are provided in the Excel version at [www.bls.gov/ilc/intl\\_unemployment\\_rates\\_monthly.xls](http://www.bls.gov/ilc/intl_unemployment_rates_monthly.xls).

**TABLE 3. Employment indexes adjusted to U.S. concepts, 10 countries, seasonally adjusted**

	Q2 2011	Q3 2011	Q4 2011	Q1 2012	Mar. 2011	Jan. 2012	Feb. 2012	Mar. 2012	Change from Feb. 2012-Mar. 2012
	Q1 2007 = 100				Jan. 2007 = 100				
United States	95.5	95.6	96.2	97.1	95.7	97.0	97.3	97.3	0.0
Australia	109.4	109.4	109.5	109.7	109.9	110.0	109.8	110.2	0.4
Canada	103.9	104.3	104.2	104.5	103.8	104.7	104.7	105.0	0.3
France	102.5	101.7	102.4	103.6	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	
Germany	102.9	103.2	103.5	104.0	102.7	104.1	104.2	104.2	0.0
Italy	99.4	99.6	99.5	99.6	99.8	99.5	99.6	99.4	-0.2
Japan (2)	98.2	97.9	97.8	98.2	98.8	98.4	98.8	98.5	-0.3
Netherlands	102.2	102.3	102.9	103.0	102.5	103.3	103.4	103.2	-0.2
Sweden	103.0	103.2	103.3	103.2	102.3	102.2	102.9	103.7	0.8
United Kingdom	100.6	100.1	100.2		100.7	100.5			

(1) Data are not published on a monthly basis.

(2) Japan data from March 2011 through August 2011 are based on referential estimates from the Statistics Bureau of Japan that include areas affected by the March 11, 2011 earthquake.

NOTE: See [Technical notes](#) for information on sources and methods.

Longer time series are provided in the Excel version at [www.bls.gov/ilc/intl\\_unemployment\\_rates\\_monthly.xls](http://www.bls.gov/ilc/intl_unemployment_rates_monthly.xls).

## Technical notes

### ***Data adjusted to U.S. concepts***

Data in tables 1 and 3 are on a civilian labor force basis and are from household surveys unless otherwise noted. Although the U.S. lower age limit is 16 years, the age limit for other countries varies from 15 to 16 years. No adjustment is made for the treatment of layoffs. For some countries, no adjustment is made for the treatment of unpaid family workers, persons waiting to start a new job, and passive job seekers (for example, persons only reading newspaper ads as their method of job search). In the United States, job search must be "active," such as placing or answering advertisements, and simply reading ads is not enough to qualify as active search. These unadjusted differences have a negligible effect on the comparisons. For further information on comparability issues, see Constance Sorrentino, "International unemployment rates: how comparable are they?" *Monthly Labor Review*, June 2000, pp. 3-20, at [www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2000/06/art1full.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2000/06/art1full.pdf).

Employment indexes are calculated using employment levels underlying the unemployment rates and therefore are also from household surveys. Household surveys provide greater comparability of labor market trends across countries than establishment surveys, although both types of surveys are used to measure employment. In the United States, the establishment survey provides a highly reliable gauge of monthly change in nonfarm payroll employment while the household survey provides a broader picture of employment including agriculture and the self-employed. For details on the differences between the two U.S. surveys, see [www.bls.gov/web/ces\\_cps\\_trends.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/web/ces_cps_trends.pdf). Note that trends shown in table 3 are for the number of persons in employment and not the number of jobs.

For further qualifications on data adjusted to U.S. concepts and historical annual figures, see "International Comparisons of Annual Labor Force Statistics, Adjusted to U.S. Concepts, 10 countries, 1970-2010," March 30, 2011, at [www.bls.gov/ilc/flscomparelf.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ilc/flscomparelf.htm).

### ***Unemployment rates unadjusted by BLS***

Data in table 2 are not adjusted by BLS to reflect U.S. concepts. They exclude conscripts but include career military living in private households. These data are prepared by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) according to the International Labor Office (ILO) definitions and are called harmonized unemployment rates. For details on methods and concepts, see "European Union labor force survey, methods and concepts, 2001," at [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-BF-03-002/EN/KS-BF-03-002-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-BF-03-002/EN/KS-BF-03-002-EN.PDF). Data are reproduced with permission from EUROSTAT.

The European Union-27 (EU-27) refers to EU member countries as of January 1, 2007. The EU-27 rate is the population-weighted average for the following 27 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

The Euro area refers to EU member countries that adopted the euro as a common currency. The composition of the euro area changes over time. As the euro area expands, data for new member countries are linked into this moving coverage series. Thus, the euro area rate changes its geographical coverage according to the composition of the euro area during the period to which the data refer. For January 2011 onward, the euro area rate is the population-weighted average for the following 17 countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.